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CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT WEEK



October 8-14

Let us make this a week of reflection about our environment here in Alberta. Reflection, not only on its beauty and the enjoyment it provides, but also on the degradation and destruction of which each of us is guilty.

And then — let us resolve to change our ways and habits, as individuals, as groups, as businesses and as governments, so that future generations will not have cause to say of us —
"It was theirs to enjoy, not to destroy."

William J. Gurko

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World meeting adopts environmental principles

The Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment has been described as "potentially the most significant event in modern history."

In June, 1200 delegates from 113 countries met in Stockholm to look at their universe and how to set up the global machinery to protect it.

Canada played an important part in the two-week conference.

The conference itself was organized by Maurice Strong. This Canadian was head of Canada's foreign aid program until U Thant demanded his services in November, 1970, for the UN conference.

He stage-managed the highly successful sessions which were climaxed by unanimous acclamation to a lengthy declaration on the human

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Honourable W.J. Yurko
Minister

Dr. E.E. Ballantyne
Deputy Minister

environment. This was compared in importance by UN officials to the declaration of human rights. The 26 principles adopted by the conference follow.

"What many skeptics thought would only be a rhetorical statement has become a highly significant document reflecting a community of interests among nations regardless of politics, ideologies of economic status," Mr. Strong said of the declaration.

The 40-man Canadian delegation went to the conference well prepared.

The committee included representatives from ten provinces, members of non-governmental organizations and federal government senior staff members. One of the official Canadian delegates was the Honourable W. J. Yurko, Minister of the Environment for Alberta.

The conference itself dates back to 1968 when Sweden proposed to the UN Economic and Social Council that such a conference be held. It was approved by the General Assembly that year.

Preparatory teams within the Canadian government aided by recommendations from the committee and the public prepared papers on a number of issues of concern to Canada. In addition Canadian experts laid the groundwork for action proposals and led the way in proposing principles for marine pollution control. All were adopted by the 113 countries at the conference and will go to the United Nations Assembly for approval in November.

Principles adopted at the conference are:

1. Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality which permits a life of dignity and well-being, and bears

a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. In this respect, policies promoting or perpetuation apartheid, racial segregation, discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination stand condemned and must be eliminated.



Nations converged in Folkets Hus building in Stockholm for world conference.

2. The natural resources of the earth including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management as appropriate.

3. The capacity of the earth to produce vital renewable resources must be maintained and wherever practicable restored or improved.
4. Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat which are now gravely imperilled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation including wildlife must therefore receive importance in planning for economic development.
5. The non-renewable resources of the earth must be employed in such a way as to guard against the danger of their future exhaustion and to ensure that benefits from such employment are shared by all mankind.
6. The discharge of toxic substances or of other substances and the release of heat, in such quantities or concentrations as to exceed the capacity of the environment to render them harmless, must be halted in order to ensure that serious or irreversible damage is not inflicted upon ecosystems. The just struggle of the peoples of all countries against pollution should be supported.
7. States shall take all possible steps to prevent pollution of the seas by substances that are liable to create hazards to human health, to harm living resources and marine life, to damage amenities or to interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea.
8. Economic and social development is essential for ensuring a favourable living and working environment for man and for creating con-

ditions on earth that are necessary for the improvement of the quality of life.

9. Environmental deficiencies generated by the conditions of under-development and natural disasters pose grave problems and can best be remedied by accelerated development through the transfer of substantial quantities of financial and technological assistance as a supplement to the domestic effort of the developing countries and such timely assistance as may be required.
10. For the developing countries, stability of prices and adequate earnings for primary commodities and raw material are essential to environmental management since economic factors as well as ecological processes must be taken into account.
11. The environmental policies of all States should enhance and not adversely affect the present or future development potential of developing countries, nor should they hamper the attainment of better living conditions for all, and appropriate steps should be taken by States and international organizations with a view to reaching agreement on meeting the possible national and international economic consequences resulting from the application of environmental measures.
12. Resources should be made available to preserve and improve the environment, taking into account the circumstances and particular requirements of developing countries and any costs which may emanate

from their incorporating environmental safeguards into their development planning and the need for making available to them, upon their request, additional international technical and financial assistance for this purpose.

13. In order to achieve a more rational management of resources and thus to improve the environment, States should adopt an integrated and co-ordinated approach to their development planning so as to ensure that development is compatible with the need to protect and improve the human environment for the benefit of their population.
14. Rational planning constitutes an essential tool for reconciling any conflict between the needs of development and the need to protect and improve the environment.
15. Planning must be applied to human settlements and urbanization with a view to avoiding adverse effects on the environment and obtaining maximum social, economic and environmental benefits for all. In this respect projects which are designed for colonialist and racist domination must be abandoned.
16. Demographic policies, which are without prejudice to basic human rights and which are deemed appropriate by Governments concerned, should be applied in those regions where the rate of population growth or excessive population concentrations are likely to have adverse effects on the environment or development, or where low population density may prevent improvement of the human environment and impede development.

17. Appropriate national institutions must be entrusted with the task of planning, managing or controlling the environmental resources of States with the view to enhancing environmental quality.
18. Science and technology, as part of their contribution to economic and social development, must be applied to the identification, avoidance and control of environmental risks and the solution of environmental problems and for the common good of mankind.
19. Education in environmental matters, for the younger generation as well as adults, giving due consideration to the underprivileged, is essential in order to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving the environment in its full human dimension.
20. Scientific research and development in the context of environmental problems, both national and multinational, must be promoted in all countries, especially the developing countries. In this connection, the free flow of up-to-date scientific information transfer of and experience must be supported and assisted, to facilitate the solution of environmental problems; environmental technologies should be made available to developing countries on terms which would encourage their wide dissemination without constituting an economic burden on the developing countries.
21. States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within

their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

22. States shall co-operate to develop further the international law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage caused by activities within the jurisdiction or control of such States to areas beyond their jurisdiction.
23. Without prejudice to such criteria as may be agreed upon by the international community, or to standards which will have to be determined nationally, it will be essential in all cases to consider the systems of values prevailing in each country, and the extent of the applicability of standards which are valid for the most advanced countries but which may be inappropriate and of unwarranted social cost for the developing countries.
24. International matters concerning the protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a co-operative spirit by all countries, big or small, on an equal footing. Co-operation through multilateral or bilateral arrangements or other appropriate means is essential to effectively control, prevent, reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects resulting from activities conducted in all spheres, in such a way that due account is taken of the sovereignty and interests of all States.
25. States shall ensure that international organizations play a co-ordinated, efficient and dynamic role for the protection and improvement of the environment.

26. Man and his environment must be spared the effects of nuclear weapons and all other means of mass destruction. States must strive to reach prompt agreement, in the relevant international organs, on the elimination and complete destruction of such weapons.
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New bottle and can return system effective January 1

The Honourable W. J. Yurko, Minister of the Environment, has announced a new system for the return of beverage containers, to become effective January 1, 1973.

Mr. Yurko stated that in determining a workable system two over-riding considerations were established: the use of the refillable container must not be jeopardized, and the system must be convenient for the consumer.

Starting the beginning of next year, all retail stores throughout the province that sell soft drinks will accept for refund all refillable soft drink containers (bottles) of the type and brand they sell.

At the same time, universal depots which will take back all beverage containers will also be established.

Under the new system, the manufacturer of the beverage will have to pay the retailer or depot operator a one cent per container handling and sorting charge.

Retailers need not accept more than 120 bottles from one person per day, and must pay the refund in cash unless the customer agrees otherwise.

A retailer need not accept non-refillable containers, such as cans and one-way bottles, if he is within two miles of a universal depot accepting all containers.

However, if he is further than two miles from a universal depot, he must accept for refund all soft drink containers he sells, but the manufacturer does not have to pay the one cent per container handling charge on non-refillable containers collected by the retailer.

All retailers are required to prominently display signs provided by the Department of the Environment, stating which containers are accepted for refund, and stating the names, addresses and business hours of the two nearest depots which accept all type of containers.

The manufacturers of soft drinks will initially be given the option of establishing universal depots which will accept all soft drink containers, as well as liquor and wine containers when they come under the Beverage Container Act sometime next year. When this occurs, all liquor and wine bottles will have a deposit which will be refundable.

Universal depots will accept up to 1,200 containers from one person per day.

Beer bottles will continue to be refundable through the Alberta Brewers Agents depots. Beer bottles will only be accepted by universal depots if the depots have an arrangement with the Alberta Brewers Agents.

"We have excluded beer bottles from the universal depots because the beer industry, through their depots, has been extremely successful in operating a bottle return system," Mr. Yurko pointed out.

"They get back from 92 to 96 per cent of all bottles sold, and it was felt that this system, which obviously has consumer acceptance, should not be interfered with."

Mr. Yurko stated that the new system is geared to make it convenient for the consumer to take bottles back.

"I feel that the one cent handling charge which the manufacturers will have to pay the retailer or depot operator will be a great incentive for them to provide service to the consumer."

"We are confident this will eliminate the difficulties some consumers have had in trying to return beverage containers for a refund."

"One other very important part of the new system is the requirement that all retailers and depots prominently display signs which state in precise terms which containers are accepted for refund, and the name, address and business hours of depots where other containers may be taken."

"Again, this will help the consumer, and he need only go into any store and look for the sign to tell him exactly where he can take all his beverage containers."

All vending machines will have signs stating the name, address and hours of business of depots accepting containers sold from the machine.

The new system is an expansion of the original Beverage Containers Act which came into force January 1, 1972. It required that all containers of carbonated beverages carry a deposit and be returnable.

The bottling industry established a depot system for cans, Contain-a-Way, however, Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola decided not to join the depot system.

The following situation for returning containers then resulted: all soft drink bottles, and Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola cans, were to be returned to the retailer for a refund, while all other non-refillable containers were accepted by Contain-a-Way.

This system created confusion, and was not generally accepted by the public as a convenient system.

During the 1972 spring session of the Alberta Legislature, the Beverage Container Amendment Act was passed. It stated that all liquor and wine containers will have to carry a refund, and that the Minister of the Environment is empowered to establish universal depots which accept all types of containers.

The system to come into effect January 1 of next year is a direct result of the amendments.

Directory available

The Information Division of the Department of the Environment has issued a directory of environmental groups active in Alberta.

The directory includes addresses, phone numbers, and, in many instances, a brief outline of the group's organization and activities.

It was compiled by Kenneth R. Persson of Calgary's Eco-Centre.

Copies are available from the Information Division, Alberta Department of the Environment, 10040 - 104th Street, Edmonton, T5J 0Z6

Poster contest for students

As part of its Environment Week activities, the Department of the Environment is sponsoring a poster contest for all students in grades one through 12 attending Alberta schools.

Entries must deal exclusively with the theme of what the individual can do to protect the environment. Other topics will not be considered by the judges.

Entries shall be no larger than 18 inches by 24 inches, and the artwork must be original, done by the person submitting the poster.

On the back of the entry, in block letters, students are asked to print their name, age, address, name of school, and grade. Entries not having this complete information will not be judged.

All entries become the property of the Department of the Environment, and cannot be returned.

Entries should be mailed by prepaid postage, postmarked no later than October 16, 1972, to Environment Week Poster Contest, 705 Milner Building, 10040 - 104 Street, Edmonton. Winners will be announced in November, 1972.

Winners in each of the 12 grades will receive the complete Alberta Nature Library, consisting of four books: Wild Flowers of Alberta, Birds of Alberta, Mammals of Alberta and Fish of Alberta.

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